

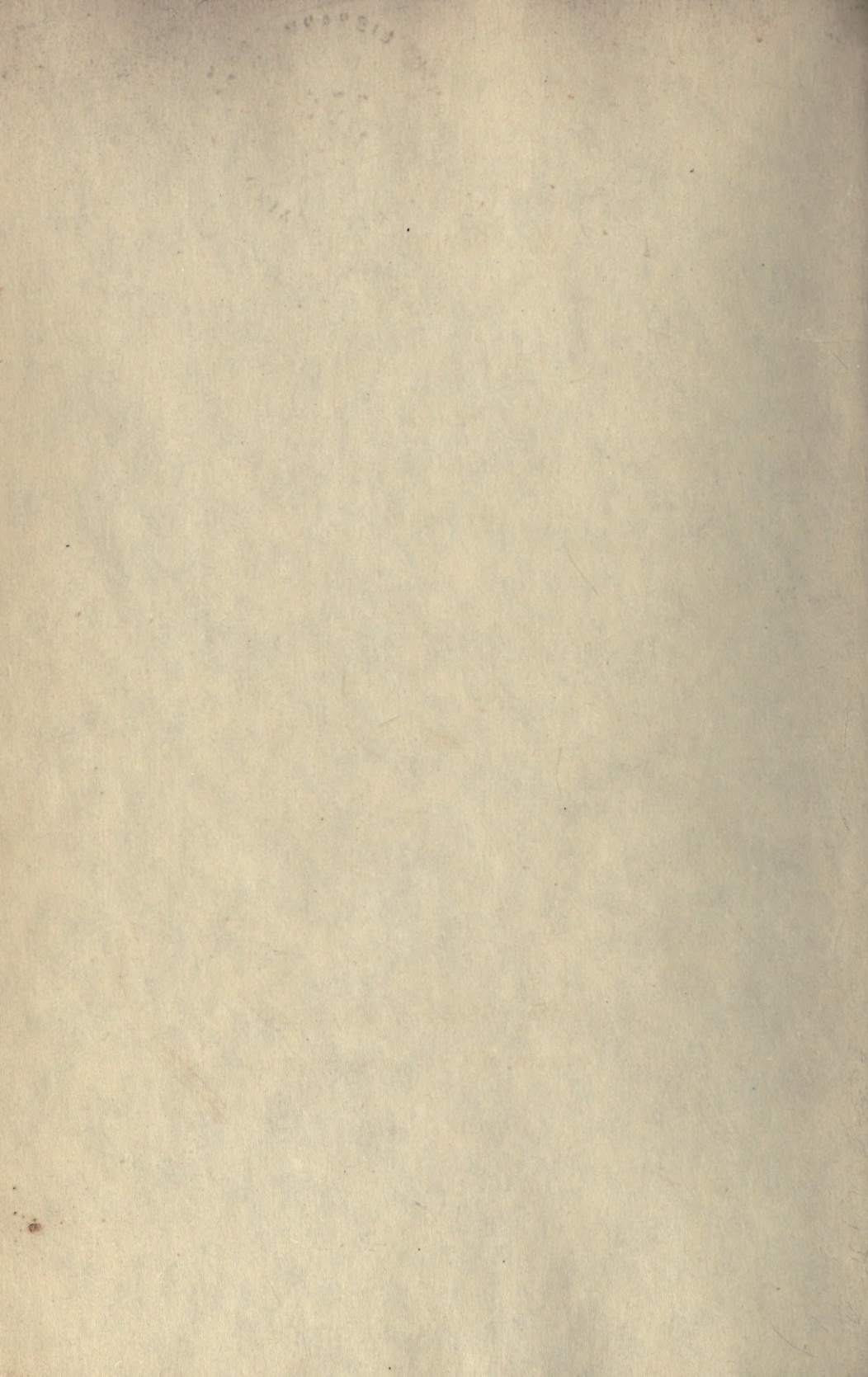
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



American Institute of Consulting
Engineers
in memoriam

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In Memoriam

ALFRED NOBLE

President

American Institute of Consulting Engineers, Inc.

1913-1914



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Unveiling Memorial Tablet by

American Institute of Consulting Engineers, Inc.,

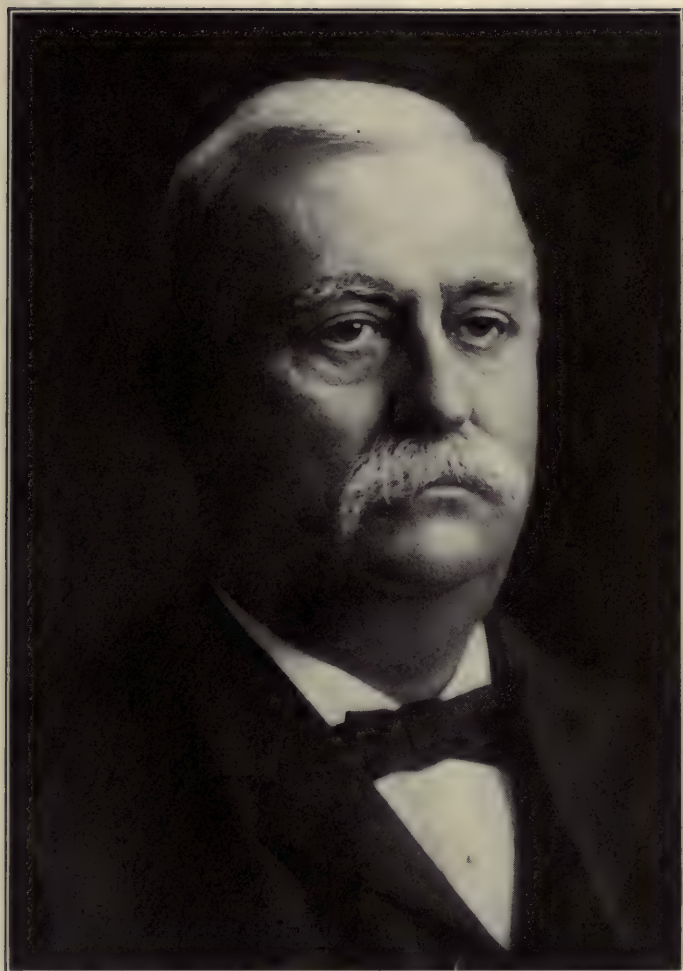
MARCH 15, 1922

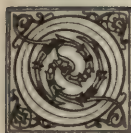


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ON March 15, 1922, the American Institute of Consulting Engineers unveiled, in the main hall of the United Engineering Society's Building, New York City, a memorial tablet to its Past President, Alfred Noble. This is the first instance of the presentation of such a memorial by an engineering society to one of its own members. Also, it is the first memorial to an engineer to be placed in the hall of the Engineering Building.

The ceremony took place at noon, and was attended by many of Alfred Noble's closest friends and associates in his work.

The opening address was made by Mr. Charles Wellford Leavitt, Chairman of the Memorial Committee. Mr. Leavitt brought back to the minds of his audience the reasons why such a memorial is fitting and proper.

The tablet was then unveiled by Mr. Leavitt.

The presentation was made by Dr. Alex. C. Humphreys, President of the American

Institute of Consulting Engineers. Dr. Humphreys expressed his thanks to the Committee and to the sculptor for their work. He then asked the President of the United Engineering Society to accept the memorial, and spoke a few words in affectionate characterization of Alfred Noble.

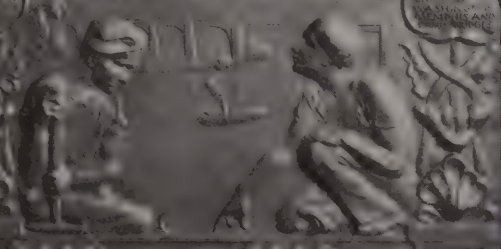
Mr. J. Vipond Davies, President of the United Engineering Society, accepted the tablet in behalf of the Society. He spoke briefly of the purpose and significance of the Engineering Building, its usefulness and beauty, and the fitness of the entrance hall for installation of similar permanent tributes to eminent engineers.

This concluded the ceremonial.

The Alfred Noble Memorial tablet was designed by the eminent sculptor, Mr. Willard D. Paddock, of New York City. It is cast in bronze, twenty-six inches wide and forty inches high, and is installed on the wall immediately to the left as one enters the main door of the United Engineering Building, at 33 West Thirty-ninth Street, New York City.

ALFRED NOBLE

1844 - 1915
AN UPRIGHT MAN
A GOOD CITIZEN
AN EMINENT ENGINEER
WHOSE LIFE AND LABORS
CONTRIBUTED GREATLY
TO THE HIGH HONOR
OF HIS PROFESSION
AND TO THE SUCCESS
OF MANY IMPORTANT
PUBLIC WORKS



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The upper portion of the tablet is inscribed as follows:

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Below is shown, in relief, a bridge spanning a river and, in the foreground, two structural workers. On either side of the inscription are decorative panels referring to the more important engineering achievements in the life of Alfred Noble.

Mr. Leavitt's address was as follows:

We have gathered here to pay tribute to the memory of a great engineer. It is of par-

ticular interest to us to know why the world has accorded him renown.

Alfred Noble was born in August, 1844, at Lavonia, Wayne County, Michigan. At that time Michigan had been a state only eight years, the country was but sparsely settled, the residents pioneers. Sprung from the loins of such a parentage, educated from the age of four in a District School, from which in due course he passed into and through a graded school at Plymouth in the same state, possessed of the great advantage of a good mother's watchful care (to which may be accredited much of his subsequent success), he passed his boyhood days in normal, practical, if exacting, routine of farm life.

Volunteering his services as a soldier in the Union Army, upon his eighteenth birthday, and fighting with the 24th Regiment of his state through the heat of many battles—not the least of which was Gettysburg, where three hundred of the four hundred and fifty men of his regiment were killed—Alfred Noble returned to his father's farm in 1865, having seen something of the world and hav-

ing satisfied his patriotism by the gift of his services to his country.

Although respecting his farm work, he realized that he had other duties to perform, and undertook work in the War Department at Washington for about a year. With money thus earned he entered the sophomore class at the University of Michigan and graduated from that institution three years later, having maintained himself in college by work on the Great Lakes surveys during vacations.

From 1870, for nine years, he gave his undivided attention to the improvement of the St. Mary's River and the creation of the lock at Sault Ste. Marie, a great work. The details of the emptying culverts located under the floor of the lock, the gate hangings and the hydraulic operating machinery were all new features. These have been in constant use since 1881 and have worked satisfactorily. This was the post-graduate course, completed in the hard school of practical experience and conferring a diploma recognized by the profession and the public. From then on, Alfred Noble was sought by colleague and by layman.

We find him going to work on a bridge over the Red River at Shreveport in 1882, and there quickly followed the demand for his services by the Northern Pacific Railroad for its bridges.

In 1886, he went to work on our Washington Bridge, the first of many demands which the City of New York made upon this man.

Then we find him building the bridge at Cairo, Illinois, and, in 1889, the great bridge at Memphis, over the Father of Waters. All the time he kept in touch with the work at Sault Ste. Marie and for the rest of his life guided the development of the power resources in the St. Mary's River.

This knowledge of hydraulics brought a demand for his advice on the Chicago Main Drainage Channel, and, in 1895, Grover Cleveland called upon him for help in solving the problem of passage through the Isthmus of Panama. Later, McKinley and then Roosevelt, realizing the value of the advice to be given by this well-prepared and experienced man, placed their faith in his judgment, which finally resulted in bringing about a

lock instead of a sea-level canal—this in minority against many eminent European and American engineers.

His country called upon him again—to go to Hawaii on the Pearl Harbor Dry Dock. The Canadian Government sought his aid for the building of the Welland Canal, New York State for counsel on the Barge Canal, New York City for advice on her water supply and her transit, as Consulting Engineer of the Public Service of the First District.

The Pennsylvania Railroad asked him to design and supervise the tunnels under New York City and the East River—and, in the midst of his activities, at the age of seventy years, Alfred Noble died.

Can we conceive of any romance equal to the truth? Could anyone desire a life more full of accomplishment? Could any country, any state or any city ask more of one of her sons?

Through all of this activity, from school days, through hardships of war and difficulties of the assistant engineer, to the final problems of the consultant counsellor, there was

the same modesty, honesty, integrity, persistent love of his fellowman, keen sense of responsibility and ever-present willingness to give of his time, his knowledge and his money to those who sought his aid.

Does one wonder that we, his fellow-members in the American Institute of Consulting Engineers, enthusiastic over such a man and such a life, have prepared a memorial, in lasting bronze?

While not perhaps one aggressively to blaze a trail, yet he was one who, with the greatest patience followed up all the data it was possible to obtain on a problem, analyzed the survey, the borings, the strain sheets, made his own most accurate observations and, with an independence of thought unswayed by influence or prejudices, unhampered by personal conceit, free from the many pitfalls of precedent, practice, policy or politics, resolved upon a decision which carried with him not only his staff and consultants, but his clients as well.

While one may be a great engineer and fine citizen, yet there falls to the lot of very

few the faculty of giving perpetual life to their efforts. It is not too much to say of Alfred Noble that he led a life from which developed tangible results in plenty—recorded in his many works throughout this continent—but more than that, there came into being through him something which is hard to describe, sensed by many of us who follow the profession of engineering; something which we have with us today and which our sons will enjoy in the future—an established legacy which lives and influences and guides and inspires in us a power to go forth more boldly, investigate and think and design along right lines, so that we may create for this world those things which make life more safe, sane, cultivated and refined.

Alfred Noble may be dead in the familiar sense, yet he lives in that impulse which carries us on toward the great achievement.

Dr. Humphreys spoke as follows:

Before, on behalf of the American Institute of Consulting Engineers, I ask President Davies to assume custody of this tribute, I

want to say just a word in regard to the work as it has been going along.

On behalf of the Institute, I thank Mr. Leavitt for his work. He took hold at a time when we were having many difficulties of different kinds. I particularly want to thank Mr. Paddock, the sculptor, not only for his great work as a sculptor, but for the very unusual patience which he has displayed in connection with these delays.

Now, Mr. Davies, as President of the United Engineering Society, I ask you to accept this memorial of our beloved friend, and in doing so, I want to stress one point, perhaps even more than that of his engineering ability,—he was a great man, an honest, kindly, modest man.

Mr. Davies' address was as follows:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Engineering Society it is my great pleasure and privilege to accept from the American Institute of Consulting Engineers this memorial tablet to Alfred Noble under the conditions which have been arranged.

It is peculiarly fitting that this building should be the place where shall be recorded for future years the record of his work, for he was very closely associated with and had held office in several of our professional societies, and has been the recipient of the John Fritz Medal, awarded for achievement in engineering work.

Our "Engineering Societies' Building" was built originally by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, on land purchased by the Founder Societies, and at the opening exercises in 1907 it was described as "The Gift to Engineering." On that occasion a letter was read from our then President, Theodore Roosevelt, in which he wrote: "The building will be the largest engineering centre of its kind in the world." At that time the membership of the various founder and associate societies housed therein aggregated only twelve thousand. Since that time, the building has been enlarged greatly by the advent of the American Society of Civil Engineers, so that today it is the headquarters of a combined membership of something like seventy-five thousand. Certainly, the fore-

cast of President Roosevelt is fully borne out by the facts.

In his dedicatory address, the late Charles Wallace Hunt stated that the building was "dedicated to the advancement of the Engineering Arts and Sciences in all their branches." It is that idea of co-ordination of practice in the various branches of engineering and of unity of purpose in the profession of Engineering which Alfred Noble's life exemplified and which makes it so suitable that we should here memorialize his work.

The Board of Trustees, which constitutes the United Engineering Society, has very prominently in view the desire to furnish and decorate this Entrance Hall and other space in the building utilized in common by all societies, so as to have a more homelike appearance and give greater use and service to the members. When funds are forthcoming, this undoubtedly will be carried into effect. The furnishing and decorative treatment are being studied by a Committee which has located and approved the acceptance of this tablet to Alfred Noble.

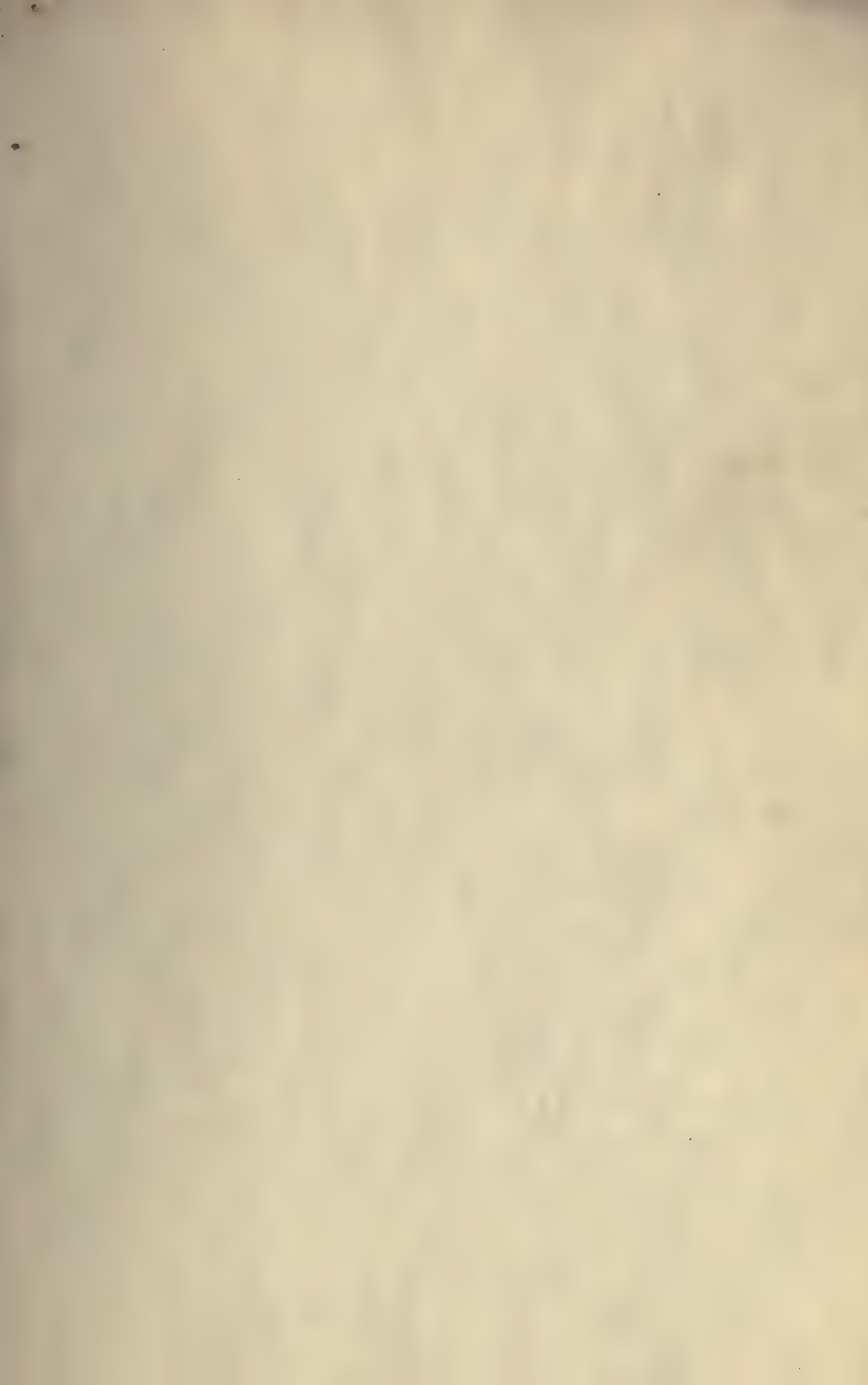
Memorials need to be of such character as to bring to the living the reminder of the life work of those who have passed on, as though they yet lived; not to remind us of their death. In this country we have little to point out to us the persons and lives of our great engineers. We are in too much of a hurry in working out our own lives properly to profit by the examples of those who have gone before. In the Institution of Civil Engineers in London, the simple names of such men as Telford, Watt, Stephenson, Smeaton, McAdam and scores of others are carved on the walls and their names are as household words to the growing youth.

In listening to the eulogies and tributes to the life, character and attainments of Alfred Noble which we have just heard so eloquently and ably expressed, I feel all the more the personal joy and benefit as well as the privilege which was mine to have known him personally during the later years of his life. We need to mark such lives for ourselves and this handsome tablet will mark Alfred Noble's life to those who shall succeed him.

What then of his life which today we would

honor? Alfred Noble's life was an inspiration to us who still live and have known him. May we pass on to those to come the lessons of his life so that we and they may be the gainers by his living. His most notable characteristic was a great personality. Always ready to give to the fullest his personal service for the public good, he lived his life joyously, and those who came in contact with him not only respected his wisdom but loved him personally. There was nothing petty in his character or mental make-up. His was one of those great and broad minds at peace and in love with this brother man, and wrapped up in his professional work.

In this building, the home of the engineering profession, we welcome the memorial to the life, work and person of one of our great brothers.



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